

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00
NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 DODE-00
ACDA-12 PA-01 IO-13 DOE-15 SOE-02 NRC-05 L-03
H-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /109 W
-----005305 270901Z /15

O R 270654Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1845
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 8321

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, IN, AF, US, CENTRO, XD, IR, UR
SUBJECT: INDIAN PERSPECTIVIES ON AFGHANISTAN, THE USSR, AND
PAKISTAN

REF: (A) KABUL 4198; (B) ISLAMABAD 5166

1. FONSEC JAGAT MEHTA INVITED ME IN YESTERDAY FOR A LONG,
SOMEWHAT RAMBLING DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION POSED BY THE
CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN. I THINK THAT HE PAR-
TICLARLY WANTED TO SIGNAL THAT INDIA HAS ITS OWN POSITION,
INDEPENDENT OF THE USSR, ON THE NEW AFGHAN SITUATION AND
ITS POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL STABILITY; RE-

EMPHASIZE THAT WE SHOULD NOT CONSTRUE HIS RECENT BUT LONG
PLANNED VISIT TO MOSCOW TO THE CONTRARY; AND EXPRESS CON-
CERN AT THE REKINDLLING OF PAKISTANI SUSPICIONS OF INDIA'S
INTENTIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE AFGHAN COUP.

2. MEHTA SAID HIS CONSULTATIONS IN MOSCOW HAD INCLUDED
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EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS OF THE AFGHAN SITUATION, BOTH IN THE
FORMAL SESSIONS AND IN LESS STRUCTURED CONVERSATIONS. HE
CAME AWAY CONVINCED THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE SURPRISED BY
THE TIMING OF THE COUP, ALTHOUGH THERE CLEARLY ARE CLOSE
AND LONG STANDING TIES BETWEEN RUSSIA AND MANY OF THE
NEW AFGHAN LEADERS. THE RUSSIANS, HE SAID, REPEATEDLY
EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT IRAN, PAKISTAN, AND THE WEST MIGHT

TRY TO INTERVENE TO REVERSE THE RECENT COURSE OF EVENTS, AND HE SPOKE OF A DEEP RUSSIAN SENSE OF INSECURITY AS THE BASIS FOR THAT CONCERN. IN CONSEQUENCE, HE THINKS THAT AT LEAST SOME IN MOSCOW WILL BE PRESSING TO CONSOLIDATE THE POSITION OF THE NEW REGIME AND TIE IT CLOSELY TO THE USSR. WHETHER THE USSR WILL ALLOW THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT TO SET ITS OWN NON-ALIGNED COURSE (IF THAT IS ITS WISH, AS PROFESSED) THUS REMAINS UNCERTAIN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE RESTRAINING CONDITIONS. BREZHNEV AND OTHERS ARE GENUINELY COMMITTED TO DETENTE AND SEE THAT THAT LARGER OBJECTIVE COULD BE ENDANGERED IF RUSSIA WERE TO INVITE AN EAST-WEST CONFRONTATION OVER AFGHANISTAN. PARTICULARLY IN HIS PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS MEHTA SAID HE FOUND POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE EMPHASIS THAT HE SOUGHT TO PLACE ON THIS BIGGER PICTURE, IN WHICH HE HAD ARGUED THAT IT WAS AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE SOVIETS NO LESS THAN OF INDIA TO HAVE AFGHANISTAN BECOME A SOURCE OF REGIONAL INSTABILITY AND BIG-POWER CONFRONTATION. SUMMING UP THIS PART OF OUR CONVERSATION, MEHTA SAID, "WHICHEVER WAY THINGS FINALLY TURN OUT, PERCIPITOUS CONCLUSIONS WON'T HELP."

3. MEHTA OF COURSE WAS INTERESTED IN HOW WE READ THE SITUATION. I REPORTED THAT WE WERE WATCHING, WAITING, TRYING TO DO NOTHING THAT WOULD PUSH AFGHANISTAN DEEPER INTO THE RUSSIAN EMBRACE, WHILE HOPING STILL THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S PROFESSIONS OF NATIONALISTIC NON-SECRET

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ALIGNMENT MIGHT PROVE TRUE. I ALSO SAID WE WERE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR TROUBLES FOR THE REGION AND HAD PERHAPS PARTICULARLY TO CONSIDER WHAT SORTS OF REASSURANCE AND SUPPORT COULD BE GIVEN TO PAKISTAN.

4. IN LINE WITH THE LAST PARA OF REFTTEL (A) WITH WHICH I FULLY AGREE, I SUGGESTED TO MEHTA THAT INDIA MIGHT MAKE MORE DELIBERATE EFFORTS TO ALLAY SOME OF PAKISTAN'S HEIGHTENED FEARS AND ESPECIALLY ITS SUSPICION THAT INDIA IS ALLIED IN SOME NEFARIOUS PLOT WITH THE USSR AND THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME. THESE SUSPICIONS WERE CLEARLY NOT FRESH NEWS TO MEHTA. HE LAUNCHED INTO A LONG RECOUNTING OF ALL THE THINGS THE CURRENT GOI HAS DONE TO TRY TO SHOW PAKISTAN AND ITS OTHER NEIGHBORS THAT IT HAS NO ULTERIOR DESIGNS AGAINST THEM, ONLY A DESIRE TO BUILD REGIONAL STABILITY ON THE BASIS OF GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS. WHEN I SUGGESTED THAT SOMETHING MORE WAS NEEDED IN THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES AND PROPOSED AS POSSIBLE STEPS (A) ACCEPTANCE OF THE PAKISTAN PROPOSAL FOR A REGIONAL PACT TO BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND (B) EXPLICIT REASSURANCE TO THE PAKISTANI'S OF INDIA'S COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLE

OF NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND THE INVIOABILITY OF ESTABLISHED NATIONAL BORDERS, MEHTA TALKED AROUND RATHER THAN TO THESE PROPOSALS. HE SUSPECTED THAT THE PAKISTAN PROPOSAL OF A REGIONAL ANTI-NUCLEAR WEAPONS PACT WAS ONLY ANOTHER WAY OF BRINGING THIS ISSUE INTO THE AMBIT OF THE U.N. WHERE IT WOULD BE RE-LINKED WITH THE PROPOSAL OF A SOUTH ASIA NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE ZONE WHICH INDIA REGARDS AS ARBITRARY AND UNACCEPTABLE. HE ARGUED THAT WHEN INDIA SOUGHT TO TAKE INITIATIVES TO REASSURE PAKISTAN, IT SEEMED TO HEIGHTEN RATHER THAN REDUCE PAKISTAN'S SUSPICIONS, AND HENCE IT WWAS BETTER FOR INDIA TO BE RESPONSIVE TO PAKISTAN REQUESTS FOR REASSURANCE ON QUESTIONS LIKE THE INVIOABILITY OF ITS BORDERS, RATHER THAN TO TAKE THE LEAD.

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5. FONSEC DEPARTED FOR TEHRAN WITH FONMIN LAST EVENING. MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT, WHICH I GATHER WAS REQUESTED BY IRAN, IS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON THE SITUATION BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE AFGHAN COUP. SPEAKING OF IT, MEHTA EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SHAH COULD INDUCE PAKISTAN TO TAKE A MORE RATIONAL VIEW OF INDIA'S POSITION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE08321
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780224-0795
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780511/aaaaaiwy.tel
Line Count: 143
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d46e3895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KABUL 4198, 78 ISLAMABAD 5166
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2537327
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN PERSPECTIVIES ON AFGHANISTAN, THE USSR, AND PAKISTAN
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, IN, AF, US, XD, IR, UR, CENTO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d46e3895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014